

## SWOT Analysis

**Type of Activity:** One element of strategic planning for groups who share a common purpose, either as one organisation or as a group of organisations (eg network, alliance, coalition).

**Length:** Flexi ½ hr – 2 hrs.

**Purpose/Objectives:** To assess as clearly and honestly as possible both the group's internal capacity to reach a certain goal or goals, and the external environment in which it is aiming to achieve these goals.

**Group:** This tool can be used with groups of varying size. If working with a large group, it can be useful to break into smaller groups before bringing the material together.

### Clarification of terms:

*Strengths:* Within the group, all those attributes that go into making up an effective group, eg peoples' experience, skills and available time; funding & other resources; networks & contacts; public credibility; clarity of political purpose; level of unity and trust; and so on.

*Weaknesses:* Within the group, an identified lack of the same attributes.

*Opportunities:* External to the group, what openings are there to advance the cause, eg because of current Government actions, connections with particular allies, anything in current economic and political environment which will help, and so on.

*Threats:* External to the group, what pressures currently exist which are harmful to the cause.

**Facilitator knowledge and skills needed:** Standard facilitation skills, with the ability to draw out peoples' reflections from a level beyond the superficial. Sector/issue knowledge useful, but not essential.

**Resources needed:** Either a whiteboard and whiteboard pens, or newsprint, markers and tape.

### Instructions:

1. Ensure that the group is a) has a common goal or set of goals for which they are working; b) understands the purpose of the exercise.

2. Draw a matrix with four quarters. At the top label one column 'internal' and the other 'external'. The left hand side of the matrix is for strengths and weaknesses and the right hand side is for opportunities and strengths.

<b>Internal</b>	<b>External</b>
Strengths	Opportunities
Weaknesses	Threats

3. Brainstorm with the group to fill in the sections in as much detail as possible within the time allocated. Active facilitation to seek clarification and detail improves the value of the analysis.
4. Once as full a picture as possible has been created, it is important in a subsequent session to move discussion to analysing the picture painted by this, with questions including:
  - What does this tell us about the state of our organisation?
  - Is there anything we can do to improve x, y, z?
  - What particular actions do we take as a result?
  
  - What does this tell us about the external environment in which we are working to achieve our goals today?
  - What can we learn from this?
  - What particular actions we should take as a result?

**Facilitation tip:** One of the mistakes often made with this exercise is to carry out the SWOT analysis but not follow it up as per (4). Without pinpointing learnings – and actions to be taken – there is little point in carrying out the analysis in the first place.

**Acknowledgements:** SWOT analysis has been used for many years in many different contexts around the world, from military and corporate through to not for profit and radical activist. Its historical origins are unclear.

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